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## EDITORIAL.

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### MODES OF EXPRESSION AS EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES.

IT has not been so long since the sugar-loaf, pear, and egg shapes were quite commonly looked upon as furnishing the ideal forms into which the ornamental shrubbery and evergreens of our dooryards were to be trimmed. Those were the merry, go-as-you-please days when all lived near to nature's heart and before the artificialities of modern congested population centers were matters of serious concern to us. The very commonness of natural forms and phenomena cheapened them, and artificial manifestations therefore possessed the relish of a pleasing diversion from nature's humdrum. Hand-made symmetry and rotundity were orthodoxy in landscape gardening, and naturalness was stigmatized as "faddism," "frillism," or "foggism;" for in the common mind these terms have always stood, as they stand today, for an undiscriminating aversion to notions which differ from the commonality of views. In short, this was the period when the function of the landscape gardener was to prune and lop off.

But the last twenty years have witnessed both the introduction into and partial elimination from education of many pernicious and powerful artificializing influences. Apparently unmindful of the fundamental fact that the life-work of everyone whose life is worth while is a continual struggle to adjust himself to natural forces and conditions, we school-men had gone on raising artificial barriers to this adjustment until we called down upon our heads the criticism that a school is an institution which most quickly unfits a man for life. Our educational efforts were guided by sugar-loaf ideals of average attainment, and our implements were the pruning hook and knife. During this period repression and suppression were the watchwords of teaching practice, and *expression* was under the pedagogical frown. At last we awoke to a realizing sense of the fact that we had lost the individual entirely in our struggle to attain and preserve the general, and that our mass-teaching was educating only a man of straw. But thanks to the fearless persistence of a few bold students of education, whose sympathy for their kind is still warm, we are at last getting pretty well away from the conception of education as a pruning process. The wholesome philosophy of George Eliot that men are like trees—if you lop off their finest branches, into which they are pouring their young life-juice, the wound will be healed over with some old excrescence; and what might have been a grand tree expanding into liberal shade is but a whimsical, misshapen trunk—is powerfully penetrating the educational thought of our time. Under the pruning-process con-

ception of education we had only too many opportunities to learn how completely out of joint the whole world seems to him whose individual desires and cravings are continually thwarted or suppressed.

But the necessary accompaniment of repression in teaching is verbal reproduction on the learner's part of the thoughts of another. The latter is, in fact, but the reverse aspect of the former. Even the primitive teacher must test from time to time the results of his teachings upon his pupil; the pupil dares not be natural, lest he subject himself to the inevitable knife, and as a consequence he must respond in the words of another. The pupil then retired into himself, and external agencies were needed to "draw him out." In due course we learned that external stimuli administered by the teacher defeated their own purpose; that the young pupil could no more be made to put forth his educational antennæ by nagging him than a snail can be made to put forth its horns by pricking them.

Happily for all lovers of humanity and human progress, most of these obstacles to education are passing away, and few indeed are they who would retard their passing. It is not mere empty optimism to see in the present situation the promise of the early dawning of a new day for education. The prolific brood of past pedagogical errors were nearly all begotten of the notion that education is an illumination of soul coming from a light whose source is without the individual. Learning was then regarded as a process of opening up the avenues to the soul through which this external illumination might enter. But we are now rapidly coming to the view that the source of the illumination is within and that learning consists in *opening out* ways through which the "imprisoned splendor" may escape. This conception exalts the function of expression in education and makes the individual pupil the object of paramount concern to the teacher.

But there are not wanting those who profess to see grave dangers in this elevation of the individual. Still, while there have been misfits in various stages of the educational scheme, most of them can be ascribed to the poorly articulated members of the organism. For example, a pupil who has been brought up in an elementary school which respects the pupil's individuality may find difficulty in adjusting himself to a high-school régime in which teaching the *average pupil* is the keynote. Moreover, teachers are possessed of an inordinate fear that pupils of strong individuality are failing to recognize duly their relation to the whole of which they are but a small part. The teacher's dread of priggishness and pertness is, however, nearly always theoretical and always immoderate. If he could but keep clearly before him that nine-tenths of the world's work is done by these strong personalities, and that those pupils whose deportment most delights their teacher's heart too often become the men and women who soon find their obscure niches in the dead level of mediocrity and disappear forever from the notice of any save those few friends whose paths cross the narrow circle of their activities, bounded by the circumference of mere bread-winning, he would easily exer-

cise a larger measure of tolerance without fear of lowering in the least the dignity of his office.

The test of all educational factors and systems is ever the same. It is neither knowledge nor ability to acquire knowledge, but power to use knowledge. The efficiency of a man is determined ultimately by the measure of his ability to mass and converge his experiences and inferences from them upon destined ends. The value of the man to his time depends upon the extent to which these ends serve to promote human welfare. Knowledge is the weapon, but the weapon may be worse than worthless without the power to use it. Hence the importance of expression in the training of children; for through the means of expression alone is it possible for the individual either to acquire knowledge or to test his power to use it.

The function of expression in education has always received considerable attention in elementary teaching, but attention has hitherto been given too exclusively to one sort of expression. We now find that spoken and written language are but *two* of the important agencies through which the pupil may communicate his thoughts and feelings to others. Painting, drawing, modeling, molding, cooking, manual training, dramatic art, and number work are modes of expression common to all children, while for many one or more of these commonly neglected modes often serve the immediate purposes of elementary education far more adequately than does either verbal or written language. When these diverse modes of expression find their natural places in the curriculum, they constitute an organic unity of agencies through which the surging energies of the pupil's innermost life may find vent. They furnish us also an instrumentality of education flexible enough to provide for the peculiar aptitudes of everyone. Backed by the store of thought-content of the enriched curriculum, the elementary school is in possession of the machinery for realizing Professor Dewey's ideal of elementary education, viz., "to organize the instincts and impulses of children into working interests and tools."

The faculty of the elementary school of the School of Education does not claim either novelty or originality for these ideas *in theory*; but it does claim to be making a concerted and persistent objective study of the practical problem of finding ways and means of reducing these theories to terms of practice and to be making a united and, they feel, substantially successful attempt to practice them throughout the school. Several years of successful effort in this direction on the part of a good majority of the faculty both before and since uniting with the University of Chicago encourages the confident belief that many of the unsolved problems still outstanding will in due time yield under the more favorable conditions brought about by connection with the University.

G. W. MYERS.